

RollPlay



GM NOTEBOOK
ISSUE TWENTYEIGHT

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1

Hello Patrons!

I've switched almost entirely over to using my iPad and a note-taking app for all my GM stuff and it means that you're going to get a ton of my handwritten notes from here on out. At least for the foreseeable future, anyway. Contained within is all my GM prep for the current arc of Court of Swords (here we come, Episode 100) and for the upcoming arc of Far Verona. End of the year, start of the new!

Thank you so much for your support, and welcome to Issue 28 of the GM's Notebook.

Adam Koebel
RollPlay GM



2

Table of Contents

Far Verona GM Prep (Episode 20+)	6
Court of Swords Prep (Episode 93+)	12
Court of Swords Prep (Episode 93)	14
Court of Swords Prep (Episode 94)	16
Court of Swords Prep (Episode 94 Notes)	18
Court of Swords Prep (Episode 95)	20
Court of Swords Prep (Episode 95 Part 02)	22

FAR

3.

VERONA

GM PREP

EPISODE 20+

POST-MISSION SHIP RELATED INTERSTITIAL



A lot of this is going to need a flash update after the end of the current mission, but here's basically what I have in mind.

- × the arrest of the ship's ACRE rep (by Nomi and co. of course)
- × Yancy rewards or admonishes the group unfairly based on his preferences
- × another Verona-related incident
- × Figure out what happens to the Emira and introduce Bronze's new character
- × Richter Ari and Gabriel have a conversation about his place on the crew
- × Worried conversation with Cecilia (she wants a leave of absence to go home to Diomikato)
- × More weird weeaboo bullshit from everyone's favourite fan-service NPC (Nicola is very excited about the Week of Shadows on Prime)

//THE MISSION BRIEFING//

THE MISSION

Type:	Investigation
Target:	the Imperial Nobility or their Assets
Crime:	prevention of corruption (influence for Crux)
Location:	Imperial Prime, Eridanus sector

When FacTurn:	After the denouncement of ACRE by House Crux, before the assault by the ACRE Space Marines on Diomikato.
When IRL:	Late May, 3200 (the Week of Shadows*)

**a week of somber recognition and mourning celebrating the beginning of the rule of the Masked Emperox and the end of the reign of the Blood Eagle - sacred particularly to House Lyra but enforced throughout Imperial Prime.*

- × *Candle lighting ceremonies*
- × *Remembrances of the dead*
- × *Sacrifices (not human, though)*
- × *Fasting and Feasting*
- × *A week-long ongoing performance of Imperial Dirges*



THEMES

Loyalty (house vs. family vs. friends / empire vs. corporate)

Imperial Opulence



CONCEPT

The PCs on behalf of the ship have to back someone in a local power struggle, but House Crux hasn't decided who - they're there to get intelligence and pass it to Yancy along with their suggestions. The options have to be connected to the STO / Imperial conflict and the recent ACRE denouncement.

Someone is being appointed to an important Imperial Post, and House Crux gets a vote on who they want to back, the PCs are here to do some facetime due diligence. This person may have some important influence and want to remember their friends in House Crux after the fact.



COMPLICATION

After they choose who to back, someone accuses that person of being in the pocket of the Corporates - essentially accusing them of conspiracy to commit treason. Now the PCs have to decide what to do about that.

At some point, when a Noble PC offends someone, they're challenged to a duel.

If things get really heated, some of the Nobles present aren't above hiring an assassin or a Deathless ship or something to deal with the Crux meddlers.



THE POSITION AT HAND

One of the NPCs is going to get Crux backing (and as a result, win the position because the PCs here are fundamentally choosing) to become **Comptroller of Imperial Corporate Oversight**, a recently created title made by House Eridanus as a response to the increasingly brazen efforts of the so-called Sector Trade Organization.



PRESSURE

Booker:	familial pressure, suspicion that someone might be crimes, duty to the crew and the ship, following orders, etc.
Nomi:	house politics, duty to Serpens, to the ship, Yancy, House Crux, personal ambition
Father Gabriel:	loyalty to the Church, to "the Empire" weeding out enemies of the realm, his reliance on Trilliant
TBD:	???

DRAMATIS PERSONAE



THE CHOICES

Augur Iuris Fornax Burrel Violet (she/her), a conservative, who believes the STO are uppity serfs and little else.

- × Rich as fuck
- × Expert in interplanetary maritime law
- × Moonlights as a defence lawyer for particularly rich pirates

Liege-Economist Δ Thomasson Ximo (they/them), a moderate, who believes we can all work together for the good of humanity

- × a member of the Church of Humanity, Repentant
- × deep seated belief that math is more reliable than emotion
- × secretly wants the position to test an illegal economic experiment inside ACRE

Rasul Vela Outtridge Amin (he/him), a liberal, who believes the corporations represent a growing power that should be tended

- × reliant on Trilliant life-extension for continued living
- × regular and generous donor to the High Church
- × conscientious objector to the whole “war on the synths” thing

Aedile Aquila Tindall Cassandra (she/her), a dark horse candidate, who wants to eliminate the corporate charters altogether and return them to Imperial control (fired up by the presence of ACRE marines on Diomikato)

- × reliant on Trilliant life-extension for continued living
- × regular and generous donor to the High Church
- × conscientious objector to the whole “war on the synths” thing

Quant Eridanus Alexander Espen (he/him), an Eridanus attache and liaison to the party

- × is an MES sufferer (low-level metapsionics)
- × lives off credit - owes a lot of people a lot of money but barely manages to handle it (lives well above his means)
- × caught up in an awkward love triangle

Yijun Nielsen (they/them), a PRISM Director of Influence, here to lobby on behalf of their corporation (and by extension the STO)

- × actually here to spy for the STO
- × has a history of pretty concerning posting habits re: the blood eagle under several pseudonyms
- × Formerly of House Serpens

EVENTS & OCCURRENCES

- × Meetings between the PCs and the representatives
- × Meetings between individual PCs and the reps
- × Meetings between the reps themselves
- × Psiball game?
- × A duel
- × Some kind of cultural observance - something off-putting that reinforces the sometimes strange nature of the Empire (the Week of Shadows)
- × A big dinner
- × A PRISM interview with the PCs
- × An unexpected call from a relative
- × A confrontation with the Circle of Lament
- × A CHR protest of The Week of Shadows

LOCATIONS

- × An art museum
- × The Imperial Throne
- × A memorial to the dead
- × The Synedrium Tower
- × Mausoleum of the Messiah
- × An Opera House
- × A mid-seizure ACRE facility
- × A large church
- × A Guild Quarantine Cube
- × The Orgone Pyramid / The Performance of the Sacred Dirge

4

Court of Swords:

Episode 93+



Court of Swords: Episode 93+ [Coming Home...]

- set in the Court of Swords, something like 15 years since the magistrates of season one
- the current situation is dire:
 - the northern border is tightly controlled as refugees from the River Provinces attempt to flee to the Court of Coins
 - the cities (there are a few, maybe three) are still somewhat isolated from the chaos + bloodshed
 - the rural areas are utterly unsafe; a war rages between the Necromancer King and the Court Army and even in the areas north of the Delta there are brigands and freebooters taking advantage of the instability
 - the Court, due to its traditionally strained relationships, is on its own in this struggle, though it does have the largest standing army so this whole thing is really dragging out
 - Heaven is occupied with dissent: the awakening of Maru Bavati has given some rebellious Tian Shi the excuse they need to cause revolt in the bureaucracy: the Fourteen Divine Reforms society calls for an end to the humanocentric policies of Heaven and a return to the old ways (in which gods ruled directly)
 - Some brave souls still fight on; the army (despite the loss in battle of the Knight of Swords) tries to keep the undead at bay and the temples pray despite the silence of Heaven
- the PCs are returning to the Court via the Golden Road from the Court of Coins and get to experience the chaos of the border firsthand

To Do

- Character Creation (Zeke)
- Fronts
- Themes Overview
- Inciting Event
- Love letters (all)
 - Zeke and Jo as intro
 - Max and Dan as update

5

Court of Swords:

Episode 93



Court of Swords: Episode 93

- introduce the characters, work out, as players, why they're together (Ramus) and what they're doing in the Court of Swords
- do Goals, ask if fortune's been told... (do fortunes if yes) then follow up with the love letters
- head for the border, for the court

names:

- the officer in charge of protection is **Officer Decha**, whose mandate is to protect the border without allowing the "bad seeds" into the country even though it's under massive crisis
- it's a military checkpoint, so tense and weird and full of some bad folks
- Ramus is trying to connect with the Embers of Imix to be rekindled
- Yotta's parents are sun-chosen, they fund the temple of the sun and pay for its service
 - ↳ Yotta has two siblings (Kel)

Ramus: fake ID is 20gp
— — follower of the temple of Death

the reading:

[JP x Dan - Justice (balancing the scales)
Dan x Zeke - VI of Wands (triumph + accl: sfection)
Zeke x JP - XI of Cups (wish fulfillment

On the Coins side, **Corporal Yan**, boss of the camp [concentration hold spell]

10

Spells Cast

- dimension door, hold monster

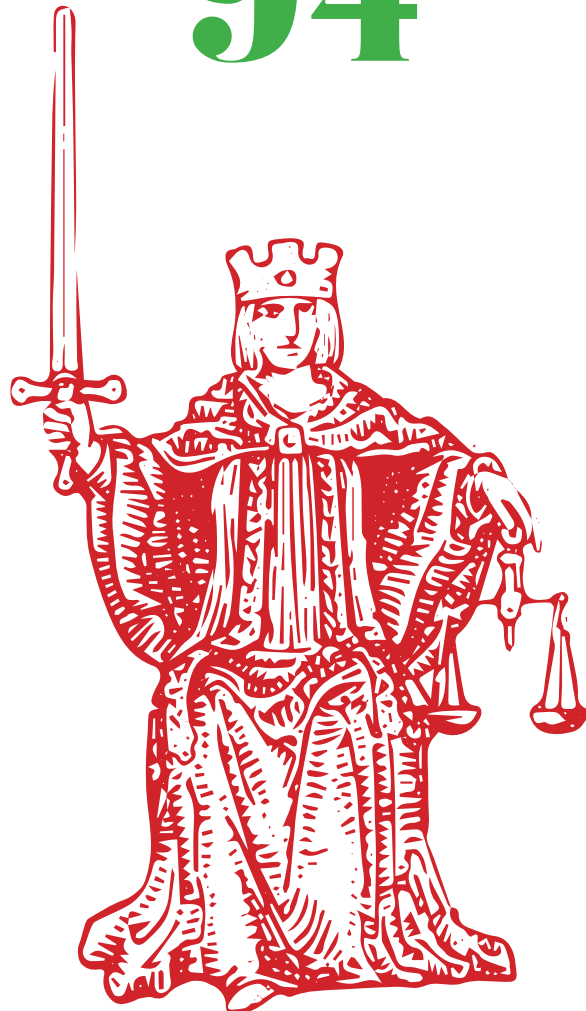
"Welcome home, Ramus Krill" (the undead emissary was sent to find + confirm that Ramus came home)

The Necromancer Ky wanted Ramus to get the potion, it's actually super beneficial if he drinks it.

6

Court of Swords:

Episode 94



Court of Swords: Episode 94

- the players have entered the northern part of the court, the section least affected by the forces of the necromancer king, it is a beautiful land of towering mountains in the east and to the south, the deep jungle of the rest of the court (bach nyā)
- the game begins after a few days on the road south; this road heads to Bắc Nha, the capital of the northern provinces, a city with a suddenly swollen population that is struggling from it
- notes about Bắc Nha
 - mythologically sacred to the Arcana of the Moon (home to the oldest temple to the moon in the Courts)
 - the most cosmopolitan city, the most liberal, the least hidebound to the old ways, etc. there are some embassies and temples galore
 - the city is built around a series of ancient caves in which the river Me Bắc originates (built on an abandoned dwarven city)
 - the city is beleaguered by its sudden growth but its leadership is being advised by a council who are helping and guiding them, made up of local priests
 - unfortunately, the cosmopolitan nature of the city has allowed several strange cults to form or flourish ~ including a handful of small mara cults, a primordial druid circle or two and agents of the Necromancer King recruiting from the slums and amongst the carpetbaggers and mercenaries from the north
- in Bắc Nha, the PCs (plus Niu Niu) arrive from the north, heading to meet with Berg, who has been sent ahead to procure lodging and a base of operation in the northern capital. Berg himself has identification papers sealed with the sigil of the Bureau of Humanity giving him the right to aid from the temples of the city, but he can decide what else ...
 - you've been in Bắc Nha for a few weeks now, what have you been doing to prepare for the arrival of your friend Ramus + his new companions?
 - find lodging
 - seek the Embers
 - help out in the temples
 - make allies
 - meditate
 - ???
- the Necromancer King knows about Ramus Krill, a powerful servant if he could sway him; the potion that fell into their hands is a deadly weapon ~ the NK wants to see what he'll do with it.
- ★ • on the road to Bắc Nha, some Court of Coins carpetbaggers have holed up in the ruins of a village and invite the PCs to join them, explaining how the Court of Swords is a "golden funeral" where all is permitted
 - a band called the Screaming Claw, they're murderers and brigands
 - cut off the heads and hands to prevent their use as undead soldiers

7

Court of Swords:

Episode 94

Notes



Court of Swords: Episode 94 (notes)

- Berg is treated badly because he's an orc, who are still seen as slaves in the South

Hideout

- something unassuming, not too ostentatious
- looking for a place they can hide out

↳ DC 14 Persuasion

- expensive (owe the landlord, 700gp)

Berg's been gathering information...

- rolled Perception (disadvantage) 9
- listened in at taverns and bars
- it's illegal to sell weapons to orcs in the Court of Swords

Bắc Hà

- broken into three districts, the mountains, the city, the outskirts

[doug's noodles]

- temples and government in the mountain district
- most of everything else in the city
- refugees and the dispossessed in the outskirts

"Heaven's Little Game"

↳ the PCs' home is in the outskirts, nearish to the city

- they're approached by a priest of the moon named Si'ang who serves the temple and wants to court the Gaija into a blessing or residence at the temple

- Omek-Rahn, the landlord, wants money and little else

- Maharib knows that the Embers are around in the Court of Swords, has familial remembrances of their rites - his people are closer to the elements

- An Ember, one with some influence, named Lume

(some random, filthy kid just made 20gp) → this kid will grow up to be a PC

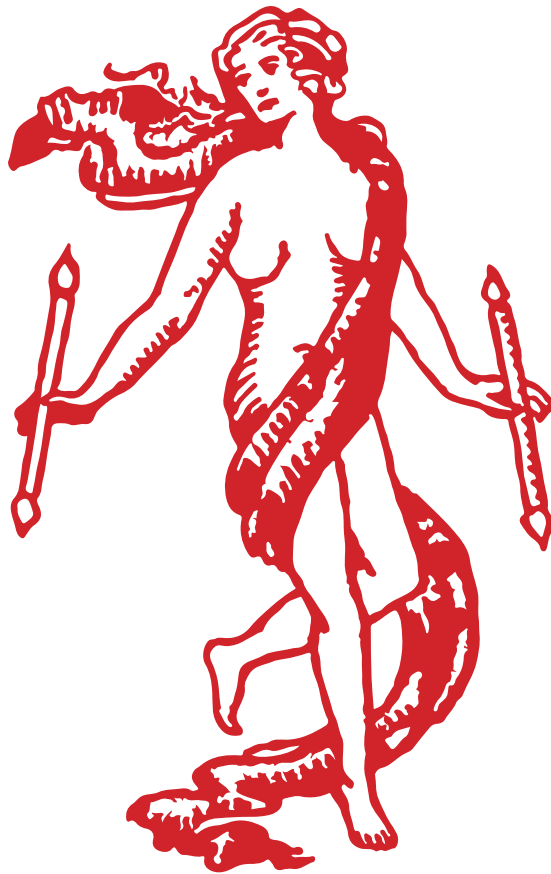
things ahead:

- the temple of the moon has resources and influence enough to help the PCs with whatever they might need, the priesthood would be willing to do things in service of the characters' goals if the PCs help them with a few things...
- Lume and her cell of Embers go about their business until Ramus finds them
- servants of the Necromancer King monitor the PCs until caught

8

Court of Swords:

Episode 95



Court of Swords: Episode 95

Now that the PCs are in Bắc Nha, they have the initiative, they can decide what to do next; all the characters have reasons to stay or go, though they may not all have direction.

Inside Bắc Nha, there are a handful of operating groups, but it's up to the PCs to intersect with them, and decide where their alliances fall. If the PCs just want to bail out of Bắc Nha (to pursue the path to the temple of the Sun, or to go South looking for Wyms or whatever) the various groups could facilitate that for a price.

The Temple of the Moon

- Representative of the status quo in Bắc Nha, the temple is ancient and inherent to the city's culture

What they Want

- the ongoing safety and prosperity of the (human mainly, others also) populace of the city
- glorification of their specific Arcanum (the Moon) and its portfolio (illusion, mystery, revelation of truth)
- glorification of themselves (riches through offerings, power through advising the Court, etc.)

NPCs

- Acolyte S'ang (a young-but-ambitious Priest)
- High Priest Sei Sai (an agender winter genasi [eladrin] mystic + illusionist)
- Shimmering Wings of Light (a temple illuminator, human, highly connected)

PC Connection

- Sei Sai has had visions of Berg
- S'ang wants to befriend the PCs for personal gain
- Shimmering Wings wants Yotta to serve the temple

The Embers of Imix

- A primordial Cult that worship the power of fire, an apostate religion in the Moon's holy city, hiding out from jealous servants of Heaven + the Arcana

What they Want

- to gain personal power and agency otherwise denied to them by mainstream society
- to undermine the structures of power currently in play in Bắc Nha by active infiltration, acts of rebellion
- to pay homage to Imix as fire of change, burning away the old

NPCs

- First Ember Lume (a woman, fire genasi, immigrant from the south)

9

Court of Swords:

Episode 95 Part 2



Court of Swords: Episode 95

- right now, there isn't much that is in direct opposition to the PCs, but once they ally themselves with either of the two salient powers they'll become opposed by the other (most likely)
- what we need now is some hooks! thinking about what the temple / the embers have to offer and turn that stuff into adventure (the other angle is thinking about what the Embers / the Moon could use the PCs for)
- essentially, the powers in Bắc Nha have plenty to offer and the PCs are deniable assets they can use towards their goals

Finding the Embers

- there are a handful of Embers in the city (more than 20 but less than 100) but none are just servants of Imix: they are scattered throughout, in various jobs and positions. They remain hidden as a means of protecting themselves from the local priesthods, etc.
- the PCs can just go out there and ask around, which will attract suspicion from both the Temple of the moon and the hidden Embers alike
 - once this flag starts to get raised, the Temple will start asking questions (gently at first, then more firmly if pushed back) and try to use the PCs to root out the Embers
 - if the PCs are getting close or drawing attention to the Embers, they send a warning (a simple message at first, then they start setting fires...)
- the Embers are secretive and threatened by the current order, so uneasy and hard to woo into the light. The PCs will have to work hard to get at them
- the Embers have lots of things they need from PC-type people, once they're convinced that the PCs aren't just going to narc them out to the local government.
 - once they're past the initial distrust, Lume will give them a task, something to advance the goals of the Embers. They're not looking to assassinate anyone or anything (right now...) but a simple theft or retrieval, or the freeing of a prisoner, etc. might be appropriate

